

**PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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SUBJECT: QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY

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INTRODUCTION

GOOD MORNING MISTER CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COME AND SPEAK WITH YOU TODAY ABOUT THE ISSUES IMPORTANT TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ABSOLUTE BEST AIR FORCE IN THE WORLD.

OVERVIEW

FIRST LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THOSE MEN AND WOMEN. THEY ARE WITHOUT A DOUBT HIGHLY-TRAINED, EXTREMELY MOTIVATED AND DEEPLY COMMITTED TO THIS COUNTRY. TODAY, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 447,000 ENLISTED MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ACTIVE DUTY, AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND AIR FORCE RESERVE OF OUR AIR FORCE. THEY ARE THE VERY ESSENCE OF ALL THAT IS GOOD ABOUT AMERICA, AND I AM PROUD AND HONORED TO REPRESENT THEM HERE TODAY.

ON THEIR BEHALF, I WANT TO SAY THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT YOU HAVE GIVEN OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM IN THE PAST FEW

YEARS. THE STRIDES WE HAVE MADE IN QUALITY OF LIFE HAVE HELPED ENSURE OUR COMBAT AND MISSION READINESS BY KEEPING OUR EXPERIENCED AND WELL-TRAINED FORCE IN TACT. A GOOD START TO THAT WAS THE REPEAL OF THE REDUX RETIREMENT IN 2000 THAT RESTORED THE VALUE OF THE MILITARY RETIREMENT SYSTEM AS A TOOL TO ENCOURAGE RETENTION IN LIGHT OF OTHER, OFTEN MORE LUCRATIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. OTHER POSITIVE IMPACTS INCLUDED THE CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE NINTH QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW AND THE COMMITMENT TO KEEP FAITH WITH FORMER ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD AND RESERVE MEMBERS WHO CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE PROTECTION FOR THEIR MEDICAL NEEDS, AND THOSE OF THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES. THOSE NEEDS INCLUDE THOSE THAT OCCUR AFTER DEVOTING THEIR MOST PRODUCTIVE YEARS IN SERVICE UNDER OUR NATION'S FLAG.

THESE STEPS ARE KEY WEAPONS IN OUR FIGHT TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN PEOPLE WITH THE ABILITY, SKILLS, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL TO MEETING THE MANY AND DIVERSE CHALLENGES OUR HIGHLY-TECHNICAL FORCE FACES AROUND THE GLOBE.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE EXPERIENCED BY MEMBERS OF OUR FORCE AND THEIR FAMILIES TODAY IS A STANDARD THAT I COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED WHEN I JOINED IN 1977. THE BACKING OF THE CONGRESS AND

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE CRITICAL LINKS IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR GREAT MILITARY. WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

HAVING SAID THAT, THERE IS MORE TO BE DONE. HOW DO WE ADEQUATELY COMPENSATE THE SOLDIER, SAILOR, AIRMAN, MARINE AND COASTGUARDSMEN WHO ARE PREPARED TO GIVE THEIR FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION, THEIR VERY LIFE, IN COMBAT FOR THE FREEDOM WE HOLD SO DEAR? THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT NO AMOUNT OF MONEY CAN DO THAT, BUT WE OWE IT TO OUR SERVICEMEMBERS TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE A QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES THAT MAKES CONTINUED SERVICE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO TAKING THEIR EXPERIENCE AND TALENT ELSEWHERE, THUS CREATING AN EVEN GREATER REPLACEMENT COST TO THE TAXPAYER. IN TERMS OF AIRMEN IN UNIFORM, TODAY'S AIR FORCE IS THE SMALLEST IT HAS BEEN SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1947. BECAUSE OF THAT, WE OWE IT TO OUR NATION TO ENSURE OUR RANKS ARE FILLED WITH THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TO FACE AMERICA'S FOES ON FUTURE BATTLEFIELDS.

PAY AND COMPENSATION

AS A SERVICE, WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE SKILL AND DEDICATION OF OUR PEOPLE ARE OUR GREATEST ASSETS. WITHOUT THEM, THE HIGH-TECH WEAPONS, AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT ARE SIMPLY IRON ON CONCRETE....USELESS. THAT RECOGNITION IS EVIDENT IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL, WITH THE LARGEST PORTION OF AIR FORCE MONEY DIRECTED AT ENSURING OUR AIRMEN ARE PROPERLY TRAINED,

EDUCATED AND PROVIDED THE QUALITY OF LIFE THEY SO RICHLY DESERVE. QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES MAKE UP 34 PERCENT OF THE \$93.5 BILLION AIR FORCE PROPOSAL.

WE CONTINUE TO STRIVE TO GIVE OUR ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE COMPENSATION PROGRAMS THAT KEEP PACE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THAT MILITARY SERVICE WILL NEVER MAKE US RICH MONETARILY, THE TARGETED PAY RAISES OF THE PAST FOUR YEARS HAVE ALLOWED THE AIR FORCE TO BETTER RECOGNIZE THE SKILL AND EXPERIENCE OF OUR RETENTION-BASED FORCE WHILE GIVING OUR YOUNG AIRMEN MOTIVATION TO ADVANCE AS THEY LOOK UP THE PAY SCALE AND COMPARE THEIR MANY CAREER OPTIONS, BOTH IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM.

THE PROPOSED TARGETED PAY RAISE FOR 2004 WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE 2003 PAY RAISE WE RECENTLY RECEIVED. IT WILL TARGET OUR NCO AND SENIOR NCO CORPS WHOSE EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND ADVANCED EDUCATION WE MUST HAVE TO MAINTAIN THE STRENGTH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR FORCE. THE PROPOSED RAISE WILL AVERAGE 4.1 PERCENT ACROSS THE BOARD, WITH THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE RECEIVING AT LEAST A 3.7 PERCENT RAISE.

WE ALSO PLAN TO CONTINUE TO REDUCE THE OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS PAID BY OUR PEOPLE WHO MUST RESIDE IN PRIVATELY-ACQUIRED HOUSING THROUGH INCREASES IN BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING (BAH). CURRENTLY, UNREIMBURSED, OUT-OF-POCKET HOUSING COSTS

AVERAGE 7.5 PERCENT PER MILITARY FAMILY. OUR GOAL IS TO REDUCE THAT TO 3.5 PERCENT IN 2004, AND TO ZERO IN 2005.

THESE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS IN COMPENSATION FOR ALL OF AMERICA'S WARRIORS: SOLDIERS, SAILORS, MARINES, COASTGUARDSMEN, AS WELL AS AIRMEN, ARE AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE READINESS OF OUR FORCE.

THE REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS OF THESE DEDICATED AMERICANS ARE EVER-EVOLVING; EACH INDIVIDUAL SERVICE MUST ALSO HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO SHAPE ITS OWN FORCE TO MEET CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS. CONTINUED INCENTIVE AND SPECIAL PAYS, AND BONUSES, SUCH AS THE SELECTIVE REENLISTMENT BONUS, ARE IMPORTANT TOOLS USED TO GIVE INCENTIVES TO RECRUIT NEW ACCESSIONS AND RETAIN QUALIFIED AIRMEN IN CRITICAL SKILLS. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 38 BONUS/SPECIAL PAYS USED BY THE AIR FORCE, 17 OF WHICH ARE MANDATED BY LAW. WITH 77 PERCENT OF THE ENLISTED FORCE ELIGIBLE TO MAKE A RE-ENLISTMENT DECISION IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WE MUST RETAIN OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE. THE ABILITY TO OFFER THESE INCENTIVES IS ESSENTIAL TO THIS CAPABILITY. WE KNOW THAT IT COSTS US LESS TO RETAIN SKILLED PEOPLE THAN IT DOES TO RECRUIT AND TRAIN NEW ONES.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

THANKS TO MANY OF THESE INCENTIVES, THE AIR FORCE MET ITS RECRUITING GOAL OF 37,283 IN FISCAL YEAR 2002. OUR FOCUS REMAINS

ON PUTTING PEOPLE INTO THE RIGHT CAREER FIELDS TO ENHANCE THE BALANCE OF OUR FORCE AND OUR COMBAT EDGE—KEY FIELDS INCLUDE COMMUNICATIONS, CIVIL ENGINEERS, SECURITY FORCES, INTELLIGENCE, FIREFIGHTERS, AND OF COURSE, SPECIAL OPERATIONS.

ALTHOUGH OUR TRUE RETENTION HEALTH IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS BY USING CURRENT NUMBERS BECAUSE OF STOP LOSS ACTIONS IN 2002, CURRENT TRENDS INDICATE THAT WE ARE IN MUCH BETTER SHAPE THAN IN PAST YEARS. HOWEVER, RETENTION OF OUR FIRST AND SECOND TERM AIRMEN IS A CONTINUING CONCERN AND A CRITICAL FACTOR WE MUST CLOSELY MONITOR AND MANAGE IN THE COMING YEAR.

AS WE MONITOR THOSE RETENTION NUMBERS, AS I STATED EARLIER, WE KNOW THAT PAY AND BENEFITS ARE PROVEN FACTORS IN THE DECISION FOR PEOPLE TO STAY WITH OUR FORCE, BUT THEY ARE CERTAINLY NOT THE ONLY FACTORS. ONE OF MY MOST IMPORTANT ROLES AS CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE IS TO GET OUT TO THE FIELD, TALK WITH OUR GREAT AIRMEN, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY. A TOP CONCERN I HEAR AT EVERY BASE I VISIT—HOME AND ABROAD, IS THE HIGH OPERATIONS TEMPO. IN MY 25 YEARS IN THE AIR FORCE, I DON'T BELIEVE THERE HAS BEEN A TIME WHEN OUR AIRMEN HAVE WORKED AS HARD FOR AS LONG AS THEY ARE TODAY. CURRENTLY, THE AIR FORCE HAS MORE THAN 30,000 PEOPLE DEPLOYED TO THE SOUTHWEST ASIA AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, ALL DONE WITH FROM WITHIN PRE-EXISTING END-STRENGTHS; PLUS, WE

CONTINUE TO POSTURE FOR A POSSIBLE WAR WITH IRAQ. ADD THIS TO OTHER TASKINGS AROUND THE WORLD BROUGHT ON BY THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM AND HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS; OUR AIRMEN ARE VERY BUSY. WHEREVER I GO, OUR AIRMEN CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE TO ME THEY'RE HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND READY, BUT THEY'RE ALSO TIRED. THEY ARE TRAINED AND READY TO DO WHAT THE NATION ASKS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY LOOK FOR RELIEF FROM THE CONTINUALLY HIGH OPERATIONS AND DEPLOYMENT TEMPO.

THE QUESTIONS THAT FACE LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS IS HOW MUCH LONGER CAN OUR FORCES OPERATE UNDER THESE STRESSES AND HOW CAN WE, AS LEADERS, HELP ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE STRESS?

THE AIR FORCE HAS WORKED HARD TO GIVE OUR PEOPLE A PREDICTABLE DEPLOYMENT PROCESS DESIGNED FOR A HIGH OPERATIONS-TEMPO ENVIRONMENT. THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (AEF) CONSTRUCT ASSIGNS AIRMEN INTO 10 AEFS THAT ARE SCHEDULED IN PAIRS FOR 90-DAY DEPLOYMENTS DURING A 15-MONTH CYCLE. POSTURING FOR WAR HAS FORCED US TO SURGE BEYOND NORMAL ROTATION AND DEPLOYMENT PERIODS, HOWEVER OUR AEF PROCESS CONTINUES TO WORK. WE LOOK FORWARD TO RETURNING TO NORMAL ROTATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

EDUCATION

YET ANOTHER CONCERN THAT IS RAISED AT EVERY FORUM THAT I SPEAK IS THE INEQUITY IN EDUCATION BENEFITS THROUGHOUT OUR

FORCE. EDUCATION IS A QUALITY OF LIFE FACTOR AND FORCE MULTIPLIER THAT IS NOT ONLY GOOD FOR THE INDIVIDUAL; IT IS GOOD FOR THE TEAM. OUR AIRMEN ARE BRIGHT AND EAGER TO LEARN—WE WANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY. THE 100 PERCENT TUITION ASSISTANCE WE PROVIDE TODAY GIVES OUR PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION WHILE THEY ARE STILL SERVING THEIR COUNTRY.

BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT NOT EVERYONE CAN BALANCE COLLEGE CLASSES WITH THE HIGH PACE OF DEPLOYMENTS AND OPERATIONS PLUS MEET THE DEMANDS OF THEIR FAMILIES AT HOME. THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR OUR PEOPLE TO PURSUE THEIR EDUCATION EVEN AFTER LEAVING ACTIVE DUTY. AGAIN, THIS IS NOT JUST GOOD FOR THE INDIVIDUAL; IT IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION.

FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, THE GI BILL ALLOWED RETURNING SOLDIERS A CHANCE TO BETTER THEMSELVES; IT HAS ALSO BEEN CREDITED WITH TURNING AROUND OUR NATION. A WHOLE GENERATION, THE CHILDREN OF BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, WERE ABLE TO ATTEND COLLEGE, BECOME DOCTORS, LAWYERS, ENGINEERS, AND MEMBERS OF THIS DISTINGUISHED BODY.

HOUSING

WHILE THOUSANDS OF OUR PEOPLE ARE DEPLOYED AROUND THE WORLD, THEIR FAMILIES ARE KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING. FIFTY-SIX PERCENT OF OUR ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED FORCE IS MARRIED, AND WE OFTEN SAY THAT WHILE WE RECRUIT THE INDIVIDUAL, WE RETAIN

THE FAMILY. AS YOU ALL KNOW, HOUSING QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY IS A BIG CONTRIBUTOR TO QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR FAMILIES. THE AIR FORCE OWNS OR LEASES 104,000 HOUSING UNITS. OUR AVERAGE HOUSE IS ABOUT 32 YEARS OLD AND 40,000 OF THEM NEED SIGNIFICANT RENOVATION OR TOTAL REPLACEMENT TO BRING THEM IN LINE WITH AIR FORCE HOUSING STANDARDS.

OUR FY 2004 BUDGET REQUEST INCLUDES \$700 MILLION TO REPLACE, IMPROVE AND PRIVATIZE MORE THAN 10,000 FAMILY HOUSING UNITS, PLUS WE HAVE PROGRAMMED INCREASING LEVELS OF INVESTMENT OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF FOUR NORTHERN-TIER LOCATIONS, WE WILL REPLACE ALL OF OUR INADEQUATE HOUSING UNITS IN THE UNITED STATES BY 2007. THE INADEQUATE UNITS AT THOSE FOUR NORTHERN-TIER LOCATIONS WILL BE REPLACED BY 2008, AND THE INADEQUATE UNITS AT OUR OVERSEAS INSTALLATIONS WILL BE REPLACED BY 2009.

EQUALLY IMPORTANT ARE THE LIVING FACILITIES WE PROVIDE FOR OUR JUNIOR AIRMEN IN THE DORMITORIES. AIR FORCE POLICY IS TO HOUSE UNACCOMPANIED E-1 THROUGH E-4 AIRMEN ON BASE. JUST AS COLLEGE DORMS GIVE NEW STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACCLIMATE TO COLLEGE LIFE, OUR DORMITORIES ALLOW OUR AIRMEN TO ADJUST TO THE AIR FORCE WAY OF LIFE.

CURRENTLY, THE AIR FORCE REQUIRES NEARLY 80,000 DORMITORY ROOMS; WE ARE APPROXIMATELY 11,000 ROOMS SHORT. OF THE ROOMS

WE OWN, MORE THAN 3,000 ARE INADEQUATE, SOME WOEFULLY SO. WITH OUR FY 2004 MILCON DORMITORY PROGRAM, WE WILL CONSTRUCT 12 NEW DORMITORIES, ADDING MORE THAN 2,000 ROOMS AT 11 INSTALLATIONS--NINE IN THE UNITED STATES AND TWO OVERSEAS.

WE HAVE ALSO ADOPTED A NEW DORMITORY LAYOUT THAT WILL GIVE OUR AIRMEN MORE LIVING SPACE, INDIVIDUAL BATHROOMS AND WALK-IN CLOSETS. BY INVESTING IN DORMITORIES, THE AIR FORCE IS SENDING A MESSAGE TO OUR YOUNG AIRMEN THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF THE TEAM; IN FACT, THEY ARE OUR FUTURE.

GUARD AND RESERVE

ANOTHER EXTREMELY CRITICAL PART OF OUR TEAM IS THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND AIR FORCE RESERVE. WE IN THE AIR FORCE HAVE TALKED ABOUT "TOTAL FORCE" FOR MANY YEARS, BUT NEVER BEFORE HAS IT BEEN SUCH A REALITY. AS I TRAVEL AROUND OUR AIR FORCE, I SEE ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES STANDING SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER PERFORMING THE MISSION SEAMLESSLY. WE MUST CONTINUE TO ENSURE THE COMPENSATION WE PROVIDE TO OUR DEDICATED CITIZEN AIRMEN IS CONSISTENT WITH THE JOB WE ARE ASKING THEM TO DO AND THE WEIGHT THEY ARE CARRYING IN OUR FORCE TODAY.

BRINGING A LEVEL OF EQUALITY BETWEEN THE ACTIVE DUTY COMPENSATION AND THE GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES IS ONE WAY WE CAN ASSURE THE NATION THAT THE VALUABLE ASSET WE HAVE IN

THESE CITIZEN SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, MARINES AND
COASTGUARDSMEN WILL BE THERE IN THE FUTURE.

LAST YEAR, YOUR SUPPORT ALLOWED US TO EXTEND THE
MONTGOMERY GI BILL ELIGIBILITY FOR THE GUARD AND RESERVE FROM
10 TO 14 YEARS. IN ADDITION, THE INCREASE FOR A PRIOR SERVICE
ENLISTMENT BONUS WAS RAISED FROM \$5,000 TO \$8,000 DOLLARS,
ALLOWING US TO CAPITALIZE ON THE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE OF
OUR PRIOR-SERVICE AIRMEN AND MEET CRITICAL MISSION SHORTFALLS.
WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THESE MEASURES, AND BELIEVE THEY ARE A
GOOD BEGINNING TO IMPROVING OUR CARE OF THESE CRITICAL
MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AS
WE CONTINUE TO ENHANCE THE COMPENSATION OFFERED TO OUR
GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES.

CONCLUSION

SERVING IN THE MILITARY TODAY IS AS DANGEROUS AS ANY TIME
IN OUR HISTORY. I RECENTLY PARTICIPATED IN TWO CEREMONIES TO
AWARD THE AIR FORCE CROSS POSTHUMOUSLY TO TWO BRAVE AIRMEN
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES PURSUING THE ENEMY IN OPERATIONS IN
AFGHANISTAN. THIS REMINDED ME HOW EACH DAY WE ASK OUR MEN
AND WOMEN TO SERVE ON THE FRONT LINES AGAINST ENEMIES WHOSE
HATRED OF AMERICA RUNS AS DEEP AS OUR AIRMEN'S LOVE FOR IT. WE
LIVE IN A VERY DANGEROUS WORLD, AND OUR PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO

DO WHAT OUR NATION ASKS AGAIN AND AGAIN TO HELP SHAPE A
BETTER WORLD FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

TECHNOLOGY IS AN EDGE WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN. TO
DO THAT, WE MUST RECRUIT AND RETAIN AMERICA'S BEST AND
BRIGHTEST IN OUR FORCE.

I THANK YOU FOR THE SUPPORT YOU'VE GIVEN OUR ARMED
FORCES, AND ASK FOR YOUR CONTINUED HELP IN MAINTAINING THE
TANGIBLE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR
QUALITY OF LIFE.

THEY ARE A COMPOSITE OF AMERICA - FROM DIVERSE
BACKGROUNDS AND CULTURES. THEY ARE BEACONS OF LIGHT FOR
AMERICA AND OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATIVES OF FREEDOM AROUND
THE WORLD. YOUR SUPPORT FOR OUR MILITARY CONSTRUCTION
PROGRAMS TRANSLATES TO MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR TO OUR
AIRMEN. IN EFFECT, IT IS A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO THE TROOPS FROM
YOU AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MANY OF YOU HAVE TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND
MET OUR AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES. YOU KNOW THAT PEOPLE ARE
THE FOUNDATION OF THE AIR FORCE. THEY ARE, INDEED, OUR MOST
IMPORTANT RESOURCE. HOW WE TAKE CARE OF THEM IS INEXTRICABLY
LINKED TO READINESS.

ON BEHALF OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE IN OUR GREAT
AIR FORCE, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO
YOU TODAY.